

Second Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 6, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 19—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 19, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: In TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan, we signalled that Manitoba would be made a recycling leader over the next eight years. This bill proposes a new law to allow the Province to prohibit designated materials from entering the soils of our landfills across the province. There are other changes as well, for example, in—regarding strengthening fines, and it explicitly signals that curbside organics recycling is one of the next big recycling developments in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to local tourism, hunting and fishing operations and diminished

economic and employment opportunities and the potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their pre-flood conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This petition's signed by S. Bowers, P. Duff and V. Shrimpton and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to have been received by the House.

Vita & District Health Centre

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Vita & District Health Centre services a wide area of southeastern Manitoba and it's relied on to provide emergency services.

On October 17th, 2012, the emergency room at the Vita & District Health Centre closed with no timeline for it to reopen.

This emergency room deals with approximately 1,700 cases a year, which includes patients in the hospital, the attached personal care home and members of the community and surrounding area.

Manitobans should expect a high quality of health care close to home and should not be expected to travel great distances for health services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Health consider reopening the emergency room in Vita as soon as possible and commit to providing adequate medical

support for residents of southeastern Manitoba for many years to come.

The petition is signed by M. Alexiuk, B. Alexiuk, G. Thibodeau and hundreds more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 433

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 433, Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists, and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by N. Slessor, G. Safinuk, E. Wiese and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care—Steinbach

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and from family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by F. Peters, C. Pratz, V. Wiggins and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the minister of—the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), I am pleased to table the following reports: the Manitoba Law Foundation's annual report 2011-2012, and I'd also like to table the Legal Aid Manitoba 40th Annual Report for 2011.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I'm pleased to table the annual report of the Conservation Districts of Manitoba for '11-12.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none—

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, today, December 6th, is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. Today we take time to remember the acts of violence committed against women and women who have died as a result of these acts. It is a sad reality that we must have days such as December 6th to acknowledge this gender-based violence, but this is not the only day we pause to recognize violence against women and the women who have suffered.

It's been over 20 years since December 6th, 1989, when an armed man entered an engineering class at Montréal's École Polytechnique. He forced the men to leave and systematically shot the women,

calling them feminists with each shot. He then moved throughout the school, shooting women at random. At the end of his rampage, 14 women were murdered, and then he shot and killed himself. Although this tragic event in Canadian history occurred more than 20 years ago, we continue to feel its aftermath.

I also want us to remember that Aboriginal women in our province and throughout Canada still face significant rates of violence. In October of 2012, Manitoba hosted the National Aboriginal Women's Summit that brought together territorial and provincial governments with national Aboriginal organizations, community agencies and family members to address the national tragedy of murdered and missing women.

On this day we also take time to remember all of the women across Canada who have died as the result of violence. Sadly, in this past year, here in Manitoba, 12 women have died as a result of violence. Let us honour their memories here today.

Earlier this morning, I attended a sunrise memorial held at the Legislative Building hosted by the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. It was an opportunity to reflect on the tragedy of the Montréal massacre, to remember the Manitoba women whose lives have been tragically ended by acts of violence and to also consider how this gender-based violence impacts the lives of friends and family members.

* (13:40)

On this day of remembrance and action, I also want to reaffirm our government's commitment to making Manitoba a place where all people can feel safe in their homes, schools, workplaces and in their communities.

On November 5th, 2012, our government, in partnership with community stakeholders, launched Manitoba's Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy. This strategy recognizes that ending violence is not something government can do on its own. Each of us has a role to play, whether it involves offering support to a woman in an abusive situation or teaching young children that all forms of violence and abuse are wrong.

I'm proud to say that this strategy also engages men as allies in this work more than we have in the past. In partnership with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, we launched a new campaign called Break the Silence on Violence Against Women. These male role models are speaking out and telling other men

and boys that violence against women is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that after we've heard the statements made by my colleagues, that we observe a moment of silence in memory of the 14 women killed in Montréal and all women who have been victims of violence. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I'd like to put a few words on the record with regard to National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Today, December 6th, is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Today we take the time to remember the acts of violence committed against women and women who have died from those results.

Mr. Speaker, on December 6th, 1989, tragedy struck at École Polytechnique in Montréal. Fourteen individuals were shot and killed for one reason only, and that was because they were women.

Each year we recognize December 6th as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We remember the countless women who have lost their lives to gender-based violence and the women around the world who continue to experience it. Although 23 years have passed since that tragic event, women are still at risk.

Earlier this morning, I also attended the sunrise memorial held at the Legislative Building hosted by the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. And it was an opportunity to reflect on the tragedy of the massacre, but also to remember the Manitoba women who have lost their lives and have been—whose lives have been tragically ended by acts of violence.

It was interesting and very moving, the story presented by Wanda Siatecki who presented a story, a friend's journey. And I believe that it touched all of us as she recounted the tragic story of a friend who lost her life to cancer but lived a very difficult and challenging life in a violent situation in her home. And I think what it brought out was the values of friendship and the power of support that can help overtake the struggles and help individuals such as her friend.

We have a shared responsibility to help end violence against women by challenging the attitudes that spread inequality. Working together, we can ensure that girls are safe, secure and confident in their classrooms and while pursuing their dreams.

Together we could achieve a future where men and women are treated equally and women are treated with respect. We can make gender inequality a thing of the past.

To the families of all the women and girls who have been murdered or are missing and to the survivors of gender-based violence in Manitoba and around the world comes our commitment to continue to work together to end violence against women and girls. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, today we recognize and remember the 14 women who were murdered on December the 6th in 1989 in Montréal.

It was a tragic day and since that time, each year, we gather and we remember and we dedicate ourselves to reducing—ending such violence against women. And yet, in Manitoba in this last year we have had 12 women who have died as a result of violence. It is a continuing tragedy that we still must work very hard to address and reduce and eliminate.

As the story that we heard earlier this morning illustrated, that the violence in that instance grew from a history of bullying and intimidation and controlling by a—of a woman by her husband, it was a tragic story that we heard of a woman who suffered for many years from this bullying and intimidation before it rose to the violence. And although the violence itself did not directly kill this woman, she died, she died from cancer, which may have been in some way the effect of the bullying and the intimidation, and the trouble that she was having may well have contributed to the severity of her disease and indirectly to her death.

I think we must remember that it is not just about women who are dying; it is about women who are affected in many other ways. And that when we move forward, we must do so with respect for others, with recognition that each person has the right and should be allowed to live in safety and be able to search for and fulfill their own dreams with networks of support rather than with networks of hate and violence. And let us hope that we can move in that direction to find that harmony, that support, that respect that we need. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I ask all honourable members to please rise for a few moments of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon members of the Fort Garry Horse regiment, who this year are celebrating a century of service to this nation. Although possibly best known for Colonel Harry Colbourne's pet bear, which the world knows as Winnie the Pooh, this regiment and its members have defended this nation in times of war and peace with valour, bravery, honour, dignity and sacrifice for a century. The members are the guests of the honourable First Minister. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also with us this afternoon and seated in the public gallery, from the Congress of Black Women of Manitoba, Dr. Lois Stewart-Archer, vice-president, and four scholarship winners of the 2012 award of merit for outstanding achievement: Sheneik Wedderburn, Dorismart Okeke, Idunnu Adejo, Okeoghene Ojekudo, who are the guests of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have members of the Westwood Collegiate girls' volleyball team under the supervision of Mr. J.J. Ross, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also we have members of Winnipeg Sikaran Arnis Academy, Markie Tabelina and Skye Tabelina and Rey Ar Reyes, who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight).

* (13:50)

And also Alexandra Nazarevich—and also seated in the public gallery, we have Alexandra Nazarevich, winner of the A Day Made Better teacher award and mother of intern Svitlana Maluzynsky; Jeffrey Cieszcecki, winner of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence; Brian O'Leary, superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division; and Kirk Baldwin, principal at Garden City Collegiate, along with family, friends and colleagues of Alexandra and Jeffrey and school trustees from the River East Transcona School Division and Seven Oaks School Division, who are the guests of the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us 19 students from Réal-Bérard school, located in the constituency of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And those 19 grade 9 students were under the direction of Mr. Brian Martel.

We also have with us 12 students of the Aboriginal self-government administration program at Red River College under the direction of Ms. Karen Favell. This is-group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you this afternoon.

And also seated here this afternoon in the public gallery where we have 26 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kimberly Dudek from Murdoch MacKay Collegiate institute. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you this afternoon. *[interjection]* Saved the best for last.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. Thank you for your patience.

Balanced Budget Government Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, it's been—what a way to end three weeks, Mr. Speaker.

We learned this morning that our Premier's ranked not fifth, not eighth, but right at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to fiscal management. That's disappointing, I think, to all Manitobans, and, you know, if he wanted to move up in the rankings, he would do well to listen to some of the suggestions from his majesty's—or Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

You know, in the past three weeks we've stood up over here for Manitoba's working poor, and the government still defends its record of high taxes and spending. We say to the government, please, pay your flood claims as you promised to do, and they respond by saying, there's more water than there was in '97.

We stand up for local governments. The NDP calls them dysfunctional. Now, Mr. Speaker, that record of excuse making and denying and of

defensive and desperate comparisons to a previous administration that was elected a quarter of a century ago just doesn't cut it, and the Fraser Institute report comments on that very clearly.

When will the Premier of Manitoba try to move up the rankings a little bit and tell the people of this province when he intends to balance the books?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We took a careful look at the report published by the Fraser Institute, and we noted that the—*[interjection]* Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We noted that the period they reported on included the flood in the Assiniboine Valley where there was, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition says, there was a very significant expenditure of a billion dollars.

The Leader of the Opposition has said, inaccurately, Mr. Speaker, that very few of the claims, less than half, have been paid out. The Fraser Institute says that we spent a lot of money, and the reason we spent a lot of money is because we paid out 80 per cent of the disaster financial assistance claims. We paid out 86 per cent of the Building and Recovery Action Plan programs that we put in place. We paid out 95 per cent of the AgriRecovery claimants.

Will the Leader of the Opposition now do the right thing, get up and acknowledge the Fraser Institute is correct? We did spend money on the flood and apologize—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pallister: I'll acknowledge the Fraser Institute was correct in—absolutely—and that the Premier is correct in claiming he did all those things and still ranks 10th. I'd say that's a fine testament to the lack of performance by the Premier.

You know, we are concerned here that we can build a stronger and safer, more prosperous province, and we have advocated through this session. We say, we're concerned about Manitoba's reputation as the poverty capital of the country. The Premier says, well, we have a plan for that and we spend more than we ever did on that. We say, we're concerned about Winnipeg being called the violent crime capital of the country. And the Premier says, I have a plan for that and we're spending more than ever before on that. And we say, we're concerned about health care and access to health care and the doubling of ambulance off-load times. And the Premier comes back with, well, I have a plan for that and we're spending more than ever before on that.

Well, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the reason that he's ranked 10th out of 10, the reason he's at the bottom of the barrel, is he's spending without results. When does he plan to balance the budget of this Province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can't both agree with the Fraser Institute report and say that less than half the claims have been paid out on the flood.

He should correct the record. The record is that we spent a billion dollars on the flood. We spent \$359 million for agricultural assistance, \$48 million for homes and cottages, \$289 million for disaster financial assistance, \$240 million for a floodfighting, mitigation, restoration and flood proofing.

And when you look at the affordability of Manitoba, Manitoba's poverty rate is the second lowest in the country.

The member opposite does not want to acknowledge the facts. On one day he wants to say we don't spend enough and every petition we get from the members opposite is to spend more money in their constituencies. On another day he wants to say we spend too much.

In that particular year we spent on the flood. We make no apologies for that, and we kept Manitoba the most affordable place—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier can't defend his record so he gets aggressive and bullies, Mr. Speaker. It's the oldest tactic going.

Look, a good government stands with the people. A good government doesn't introduce, as this government plans to do, a vote tax in the coming year which will actually force Manitoba taxpayers to fund the operations of a political party, the NDP in this case, that can't and isn't willing to raise its own money.

You know, a good government would not broaden the mandate of MPI at the expense of its ratepayers and play a shell game of trying to backfill on its own cuts to infrastructure. A good government wouldn't do that, and a good government would not continue to force Manitoba construction workers, against their will, to pay union dues to a union they do not support.

Now, the priorities of this government are clear, and I'd ask the Premier to stop hiding behind his 192 communication specialists, go out that door for a change and talk to the media, and when he does, answer a simple question that any leader who is standing with the people would've answered a long time ago: When's he going to balance the budget of the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this from a political party that took a million dollars in public financing last year and went to their closed-door convention and bragged that they got more public money than they'd ever received in the history of the province. This is the kind of behaviour we get from the minister—the member opposite.

We make no apologies for spending the money on people affected by the flood. They needed that support. The producers needed that support. The homeowners needed that support. The city of Brandon and all the communities along the Souris River and the Assiniboine Valley needed that support. We don't jump up and say, when things don't go our way, well, winter came early this year, Mr. Speaker. We don't have a lame excuse like that.

We get out and make a difference, and, yes, we have kept Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live. We are—balanced the budget over 10 years. We will continue to balance the budget as we go forward. But we will only do that by protecting those things that matter, not laying off a thousand nurses.

Taxation Possible Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): This NDP government has no fiscal discipline. They inherited a government that had the books balanced, then they spent Manitoba into a deficit and they doubled the debt.

They promised no new taxes a year ago, then they turned around and they hit Manitobans with the biggest tax grab in 25 years.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell Manitobans which taxes is he going to raise in his next budget.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Kind of a strange way for somebody from the opposition to start a question, by talking about the 1990s, when they complain about that all the time around here, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

You know, if she's asking us to go back to the decisions that were made in the 1990s, the answer is no, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to do that. We're not going to leave health care stranded for money. We're not going to leave schools and teachers and kids wondering where their funding is at the public schools in Manitoba. We're not going to leave kids without protection. And when there's a flood in this province, we're not going to abandon the victims that are affected by that flood like members across are telling us—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Basic Personal Tax Exemption Request for Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): There didn't seem to be an answer from the minister of 'finonce' on that question.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP tax grab hurts Manitoba families, and according to a new report out today, Manitoba ranks ninth among the provinces on personal income taxes.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance: Will this NDP government commit today to end the unfair tax grab on Manitoba families by raising the basic personal exemption?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I wish she would turn to her leader and ask him where he's going to get the money to pay for that very proposal that he put forward—\$135 million. Is he just going to add that to our deficit? Is he going to cut it out of health care? Is he going to cut it out of education? Is he going to cut it out of roads infrastructure in this province? Why doesn't he come clean on where he's going to get that money?

Our approach has been very clear. We've put back into the hands of Manitobans \$1.2 million in tax savings, Mr. Speaker. That's for individuals. That's for property. That's for business. We'll take no back seat to members opposite on that question.

Expenditure Increases Government Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, but he'll take the vote tax for his party. Shame on them when they could use that money for better uses.

Mr. Speaker, the Fraser report also looked at the overall performance of Canada's premiers, and Manitoba's Premier was ranked dead last in Canada for fiscal performance—dead last. He was rated the biggest spender in Canada and the worst for debt and deficits.

So I'd like to ask this Premier to finally admit that his spending addiction is seriously hurting Manitoba families.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): You know, I guess, Mr. Speaker, the members in this Legislature, I guess, draw their motivation from different things. Clearly, people across the way draw their motivation by trying to move up on a report from the Fraser Institute. This side of the House, our Premier (Mr. Selinger) is motivated by standing next to Manitobans when they need us most.

Our Premier—not other premiers, our Premier—stood with farmers in this province, stood with farmers to the tune of \$359 million. Even when the federal government wouldn't come to the table, our Premier stood with farmers. Our Premier stood with cottagers and homeowners on—in—throughout the flood, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier—our Premier—put the money forward to dig the ditch that drains the water from Lake Manitoba towards Hudson Bay where it belongs.

You people voted against it and now you're complain—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I'd like to caution all honourable members that when you're responding to or asking questions that you direct your comments through the Chair, please, to help me keep some decorum in the Assembly.

And I'd also ask for the co-operation of all honourable members. We have a lot of guests with us here this afternoon and members of the public watching through their televisions, and I'm asking honourable members to keep the level down a little bit in the Chamber so that we can all have a good conversation and debate here in this Assembly.

Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Missing Documentation

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, Phoenix Sinclair was a vulnerable young girl who the Minister of Family Services had the ultimate responsibility of protecting. Instead, Phoenix, at 5 years of age, was brutally tortured,

both physically, emotionally, and was ultimately murdered by her mother and stepfather.

In 2006, when asked about the status of the Phoenix Sinclair process, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), then the minister of Family Services, stated, and I quote: I think if the member is going to ask accusatory questions about the front-line workers of this Province, he should at least get his facts straight. I have not been made aware of any serious problems. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, since then we have learned otherwise. A number of Phoenix's caseworkers were never interviewed about their involvement in Phoenix's case. One caseworker even commented that he never was interviewed at all, which he said was odd.

Mr. Speaker, can—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I think, as we all know in this House, we've been going through the inquiry, we've been listening to the details of the tragic life and the murder of Phoenix Sinclair. And today, on a day when we mark the victims of other forms of violence, is also appropriate to remember Phoenix Sinclair and the violence that she suffered.

Clearly, in the aftermath of her murder, there were many reviews and there were many recommendations, and there was—a historic report came out, Changes for Children, led by the current Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh).

There were almost 300 recommendations. Many of those have come into being. They've resulted in things like the hiring of over 200 more front-line workers, giving those workers new tools to make sure they can protect children.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Rowat: The missing notes and the lapse in memory by this government and front-line staff seems not to have raised any alarm bells with this minister or her department. Yesterday, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) refused to stand and answer questions with regard to his department's role in this travesty, and to add to this mess, the lawyer for Child and Family Services said the missing notes will not be—have a big impact on the inquiry because the information may show up in some other files.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Family Services clearly explain what information has been kept on Phoenix Sinclair and what steps her government has taken to find the information?

Ms. Howard: I think, as I've said before in this House, the rules that are in place that govern the security of records when it comes to child and family services were put in place in 1997 by the previous government. Those are the rules that remain in place. In addition to those rules—that regulation is available online for any member who wants to go and take a look at it. In addition to those rules, there's also standards that were in place to make sure that those records were secure.

In terms of working with the commission to make the information available that they've requested, there has been an exhaustive search for all the information that they're requesting, and we stand ready, willing and able to continue to assist the commission to find the information that they require to do their job to find out what happened and give us sound recommendations.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the files are missing. The former minister of Family Services, the member for Riel, said there is no problem. She wasn't identified of any problems in the department.

Mr. Speaker, today we mark the national day of remembrance and action to end violence against women and girls. Today I stand in this Chamber asking this government to remember the horrific torture and murder of Phoenix Sinclair and from that do the right thing and move forward in respecting her memory.

Clearly, the confusion of the department has existed from the time Phoenix was first taken into care until her murder. The former minister, member for Riel, stated in 2006: I think it's time to start to show some respect.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we ask this government: What safeguards did their system have in place to protect Phoenix Sinclair? Where's the respect?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, there has not been a day since this inquiry started that I haven't started my day in memory of Phoenix Sinclair and remembering all of the tragedy that she experienced. There hasn't been an evening that I haven't reviewed what was said at the inquiry that day and watched the reports in the media and mourned her life and her death.

And there will not be a day that I will serve in this role where I will not commit myself to making sure that we put in place the lessons and the recommendations that come about as a result of this inquiry.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West has the floor.

Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Missing Documentation

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, prior to the Phoenix Sinclair murder trial, CFS officials and staff were interviewed to prepare an agreed statement of fact submitted by the Crown and defence lawyers. During those interviews, they would have undoubtedly reviewed—or referred to their notes. Those notes would have formed part of the evidence for the trial.

Would the Justice Minister care to comment on whether that evidence was destroyed?

*(14:10)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think, as I've said previously, the information that has been requested by the commission is information that we have worked very hard with them to provide. The information that is missing, there has been an exhaustive search by staff to find that information and provide it. And we continue to be ready and willing and able to work with the commission to do anything else that may be necessary to find that information so that they can do their job of finding out what happened in this case and making recommendations that we can then follow.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, we all know that Phoenix Sinclair was tortured and murdered. The transcripts are quite difficult and painful to read, especially for those of us who are parents.

The notes that have gone missing or that have been destroyed would have provided evidence in the murder trial.

Were the notes destroyed prior to the trial, and was the minister aware of that destruction?

Ms. Howard: The regulations that are in place governing the security of child and family service records, regulations that were put in place in 1997 and March of 1999, are very clear about how those records should be cup-kept. They do not allow for the destruction of those records, Mr. Speaker.

That regulation is available online for any member who wants to go and look at it. Those are the rules that were followed by the former government. They are the rules that are followed by this government.

Poverty and Crime Government Priority

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Not only is the Premier of our province ranked dead last across this country with respect to financial management issues. But under his watch, Manitoba is also the child poverty capital of Canada and we have record increases in food bank use and Winnipeg is also the murder capital of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why is he failing the most vulnerable citizens in our community?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I indicated in a previous response that our child poverty rate is the second lowest in Canada. When you take into account the affordability of living in Manitoba, and that's through a market-basket approach which is brought—that statistical information is put in front of us by Statistics Canada, a well-respected independent agency in the country.

With respect to the crime stats, the member knows full well that under this government auto theft has gone down over 70 per cent, aggravated sexual assault has gone down over 60 per cent, other forms of assault have gone down over 45 per cent, and that we have a very strong commitment, Mr. Speaker, to continue to offer safe and secure neighbourhoods through community policing, through investments in programs like the After School Leaders programs which we just recently announced which will provide mentoring and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, based on that response, I take it that the Premier is satisfied with being dead last across this country. Shame on him.

Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. Manitoba is the child poverty capital of Canada. There's record increases in food bank use. Winnipeg is the murder capital of Canada.

I ask the Premier again, because he didn't answer it in the previous question, Mr. Speaker: Why is he failing the most vulnerable citizens in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when members opposite were in office there was a program called the National Child Benefit. That program was not made available to anybody. That program was not made available to any children or families that were receiving social assistance. We have made that program available to everybody in Manitoba. That has been a \$48-million investment in families in Manitoba. We eliminated the clawback. That has reduced single parent 'proverty'—poverty in the province of Manitoba by 27 per cent.

When members opposite were in office, they cut daycare spots. We've expanded daycare spots and we make those available to people that want to enter the workforce. And we have the third lowest unemployment rate in the country, Mr. Speaker. People are working in Manitoba.

The members—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The First Minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba remains the child poverty capital of Canada. We have record increases in people using food banks in our province. Winnipeg is the murder capital of Canada. Children are falling through the cracks of our child welfare system. The list goes on and on.

Will the Premier just admit that his policies have failed the most vulnerable people in our community?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, using the appropriate tools of measurement of what has been accomplished, another very strong indicator that has lifted many people out of poverty is our increases in the minimum wage. And we've raised the minimum wage in this province every single year, from \$6 when members opposite were in office to over \$10 now, and that has lifted people out of poverty. They refused to raise the minimum wage, they drove people out of the labour market, they drove people onto social assistance, and then they clawed back the resources that were available for children.

Their record on child poverty was abysmal. Ours has reduced it for single—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Government Performance Accountability

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, what we've seen this session more than ever is that

this is a government that's not in touch with the priorities of Manitobans. At a time when there is a record deficit, at a time when this government is racking up more debt than ever before, when hydro rates are skyrocketing, when we're the violent crime capital of Canada and when poverty is higher in Manitoba than anywhere else in Canada, what is the priority of this government? They spent the last three weeks trying to defend a vote tax to put money into their pockets. They spent the last three weeks trying to defend 192 spinners to try to keep the bad news under wraps.

Will this Premier just admit that his predecessor once said that he would govern for all Manitobans, but under his watch he's only governing for himself and the NDP?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): That's a—that—to say the least, that's a precious comment from a member who just went to a closed-door convention and bragged that they'd received more public money for their election than at any time in history, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of money that is dedicated in the budget to servicing the debt in Manitoba is 6 and a half cents. Under the members opposite it was 13 and a half cents. We've reduced the cost of servicing the debt in Manitoba by over 50 per cent, and that money has gone into front-line services.

Under the members opposite they had 13 regional health authorities; we have five. They had 57 school divisions; we have 37. Their record was one of inefficiency and non-action, our record is one—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, because I'm a generous person, you know, I might be inclined to believe the Premier, but when I look at him, he looks a lot like somebody who once said that Crocus was strong. You know, he bears a strong resemblance to somebody who once said they would balance the budget by 2014, and he looks exactly like somebody who once said they wouldn't raise taxes and then raised taxes to the highest level in 25 years. It's a wonder that he was ranked dead last. I'm only surprised he wasn't ranked less than dead last when it comes to fiscal management.

Won't he acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, today, that this is a government that he leads that's out of steam,

it's out of energy and it's out of touch with Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy getting comments from the member of Steinbach who once said he'd run for Leader of the Official Opposition and then wussed out on it.

Here's the reality: members opposite, Mr. Speaker, they get up—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

While the words that were chosen by the First Minister perhaps are not in the rule book considered to be unparliamentary, I do caution the honourable First Minister, please pick and choose your words very carefully. As your Speaker, I want to make sure that this is a very respectful place so that members can have an open and reasonable debate. So I caution the honourable First Minister in the—his choice of words.

And while I'm on my feet, I'll recognize that in the loge to my right, the former member for Burrows, Mr. Doug Martindale.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for those words of advice.

* (14:20)

The member opposite makes the case that we're only governing for this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. I only wish he would have had the opportunity to be at Steinbach when we opened the new high school there. I only wish he would be in Deloraine where we have full CancerCare hubs now available or in Hamiota or in Morden and Winkler where we're putting new CancerCare hubs in place. I only wish he'd be in Steinbach when the QuickCare clinic opened this year.

We've made investments in every part of Manitoba, regardless of political stripe. The roads are paved to Steinbach, Mr. Speaker. When the members opposite were in—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The First Minister's time is expired.

Family Services and Labour Department Request for Removal of Minister

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in January, the Premier chose the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) to be the Minister of Family

Services preceding and during the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We've learned that the supervisory notes for many supervisors are missing, and yet this minister refuses to tell the opposition what specific actions she's taken or will take to find the notes and why they're missing.

Winnipeg Free Press 'columnist' Lindor Reynolds has compared the missing notes and the NDP government's potential involvement in them going missing to Watergate.

I ask the Premier: Will the Premier remove the Minister of Family Services by the end of 2012 to bring accountability and transparency to the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and the Family Services Department?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed in the question from the member from River Heights and the Leader of the Liberal Party.

The Minister of Family Services and Labour is one of the finest ministers in this government and I will defend her record of service to this Province every single day.

And I say to the member from River Heights, this is the government that called the inquiry to get to the bottom of the Phoenix Sinclair tragedy. It was a horrible tragedy and we are spending resources on an inquiry, an independent inquiry, chaired by a very respected former justice from the—British Columbia, to have a fair, impartial and independent review of what happened there, so that we can ensure that children that have to come into care, through no fault of their own, are the—are protected.

And I know this minister works every day to make the child welfare system better and we will defend and honour the outcomes of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. And this minister will—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the majority of children in care are Aboriginal, yet Manitoba's grand chiefs have petitioned the NDP for the removal of Children's Advocate—former 'chivald's' advocate Darlene MacDonald, as her performance has alarmed them, but the Minister of Family Services has refused.

On July 8th, 2011, they submitted to the NDP the names of board members they recommended for

the Southern First Nations Network of Care. I table these documents. Two weeks ago, this minister still hadn't ensured that these board members were in place and placed her deputy minister in charge.

I ask the Premier: Will he remove the Minister of Family Services to gain broken trust the grand chiefs of Manitoba have in this minister?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, let the record show that anybody that's appointed to a child welfare authority board, has to have due diligence done in terms of criminal record checks, to make sure they're appropriate and suitable for that position. The minister is doing that job properly. Those checks are being done by independent agencies. They take the time they need to be able to give an accurate response to the ministry on whether that member is suitable for the board.

And I'm very disappointed again with the member from River Heights on trying to suggest that the minister has done something inappropriate by doing all the due diligence necessary to make sure that anybody that's appointed to a child welfare authority board is suitable for that position and will not be a risk to the public. That's a very disappointing comment from the member from River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, under this Minister of Family Services, children in care continue to be in danger of violence. She still failed to properly implement proper child abuse registry treks and criminal record checks, as the Auditor General's report recently showed. She's failed to recognize the Winnipeg Free Press has said that Manitoba CFS is antiquated and needs to be overhauled to ensure money is spent to support families, not to break them up.

I ask the Premier: For the issues which I've mentioned, will he remove the Minister of Family Services by the end of 2012 to bring safety to children in care in this province, or will it take public rallies to do this?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, again, I say to the member opposite, in his second question, he wanted to abrogate the process of doing due diligence on the appropriateness of people that are serving on child welfare authority boards. In the next question, he demands more due diligence. In the very next question, he demands more due diligence. That inconsistency goes to the very heart of the lack of

credibility of the member from River Heights's demand for any changes in the ministry.

The minister has done the job of ensuring the public inquiry was properly put in place and is doing its job without fear or favour, without any interference in what they're doing. The minister has been very involved in increasing prevention programs in the child welfare system. The minister has been involved to ensure children are looked after and are protected to the extent of the available resources in—

Broadway Neighbourhood Centre Just TV Program

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): You certainly wouldn't know it from the questions answered today and throughout this session, but people in this government are remarkably different in giving their answers. Our government quite clearly believes in the importance of empowerment for a vulnerable people and taking proactive steps to make a difference in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, many of us gathered today and many members of the public gathered today to commemorate the Montréal massacre of December 6th in 1989, and just one of many proactive programs that our government very proudly supports happens to exist in my own home neighbourhood of West Broadway.

I'm wondering if our honourable Minister of Family Services might care to expand on that program and talk about some of the great work that's going on in partnership with our government.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, thank you very much for the question. It gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the great work that young people are doing at the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre in a project called Just TV. With support from the government of Manitoba, they've put together a video that is in the voices of young people and young men that takes a look at what the impact is of domestic violence on the children who live in those homes and also helps those young people understand that cycle of violence and how they can break it.

I'm very proud to say that last night at the Just TV annual film festival that video was premiered. I know that we had someone from the Blue Bombers there to congratulate the young people who are involved in that. This is another part of our public

education effort to involve men and boys in stopping violence against women.

Manitoba Hydro–Bipole III Needs For and Alternatives To Review

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, export sales to the United States can't be fully judged without evaluating the cost of getting the electricity to the US.

Will the minister put Bipole III through a Needs For and Alternatives To, or NFAT, at the same time as Keeyask and Conawapa so we can get a clear picture of the integrated economics of this combined \$18-billion project?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I'm very happy the Leader of the Opposition's allowed the member to stand up again in the House, and it allows me the opportunity to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that the residential rate for a thousand kilowatts of power in Manitoba is \$76.25; in Vancouver it's \$87.77; in St. John's in Newfoundland it's \$125.48; in Moncton it's \$118.23; in Halifax it's double.

Mr. Speaker, the hydroelectric rates are the lowest in Manitoba. The bundled rates of hydroelectricity, heating and insurance is the lowest in the country, and we're going to keep it that way by exporting our power to the United States and to provinces east and west.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) unleashed the member and allowed him to answer the question. Maybe we'll get another one of the, how many quills in a porcupine.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has ordered a NFAT for Keeyask and Conawapa to ensure that they are economically sound, but not Bipole III. A Conservation Minister also cut a proposal to have the NFAT review done at the environmental hearings.

Is the minister afraid to send Bipole III through an NFAT because he knows it would fail?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, two elections ago the issue of where the bipole should go was put to the people, and a few Conservatives lost their seats. In the next election when we talked about bipole and we put bipole on the pamphlet, whether it should go down the east side and the west side, more Conservatives lost their seats.

Mr. Speaker, now that bipole is being built for security and reliability to continue Manitoba's hydro

is the most secure and reliable in North America, as we expand the commercial opportunities for hydro 'across' the—across the country, we're going to ensure that bipole is built so that we continue to have security and we can continue to have the lowest rates of electricity in North America, no thanks to members opposite. But because on this side of the House we build hydro, we don't tear it down.

* (14:30)

Marion Street Processing Plant Consultations with Residents

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have been calling for increased slaughter capacity for years. We on this side of the House understand the importance of consultation; this NDP government does not.

The NDP government has been taxing livestock workers and farmers with Marion Street plant. The NDP has con-ignored concerns from residents in Winnipeg and St. Boniface. We know that the best partner in business is your neighbour, however, the proposed plant on Marion Street, the neighbours have been ignored. There has been no consultation with the stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Has he done his due diligence on this plant? Just because of the good location 40 years ago, is the location still suitable? Are the neighbours onside with this project?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): As the member opposite knows, I think he would have a tendency not to agree that we as a government—we as a government believe in slaughter facilities in the province of Manitoba, and we are in consultation with the MCECs of the world to develop a federal slaughter facility in the province. And then—and I wonder if the members opposite truly believe in a federal slaughter facility.

Mr. Speaker: Prior—I know you're giving me an opportunity to get my exercise here today for the number of times that I've had to rise to caution the House to make sure that we conduct our business in a fair and reasonable and respectful manner. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the House again, please keep the level down a little bit to allow the member—the minister to answer the question and the honourable member for Lakeside to ask his next question.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, to complete his response.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Obviously we will continue to move forward in developing a strong plan to develop a slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba, and I—may I have the 'dedious' to ask—to answer the last question in session today?

Mr. Speaker: No. The minister's time has expired at this particular moment.

Mr. Eichler: We'll give you one more chance, Mr. Minister.

When a wise person makes a mistake on investment, he or she learns from that mistake, but this NDP government constantly throws good money after bad, expecting a different outcome. Mr. Speaker, we know there needs to be a strong business plan for any successful venture. We know that the best partner in any business is your neighbour who is onside with you. In this proposed venture, the neighbours have been ignored; therefore, there are too many unanswered questions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the min for Agriculture: Has he done his diligence on this plant? Is there suitable infrastructure being planned? Just because they're a good location 40 years ago, is it onside today?

Mr. Kostyshyn: [*interjection*] Thank you.

The proposal on Marion Street is one option being developed for a federal slaughter facility. MCEC will need to consider the residents and a solid business plan.

I gather, Mr. Speaker, the opposition chooses not to listen to the answer, but as you would anticipate, that—I guess that's their choice to not listen to the proposal—that I'm very proud to have been a cattle producer. They acknowledged numerous times we need a slaughter facility in this province, and I want to assure the members of the opposite that we will move forward in developing the business plans—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

Now we'll move on to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Congress of Black Women of Canada

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to day to honour both a deserving organization and four women who are proud to call Manitoba their new home. As such,

I wish to pay tribute to the Congress of Black Women of Manitoba for the amazing work they do, and also to their scholarship winners of 2012, who are with us today in the gallery.

The Congress of Black Women of Manitoba is a non-profit organization which works to promote the consciousness, education and rights of black women in Manitoba. Founded on International Women's Day in 1981, the congress has since grown to a membership of approximately 140 formal members. To address its mandate, the congress employs a variety of programs, focusing on cross-cultural relations, effective employment, health and consumer awareness.

Additionally, the congress works to promote education, familiarizing women with the educational systems and institutions in Manitoba, and it's on this note that I wish to congratulate the congress' scholarship winners of 2012.

At the 14th annual Cultural Unity Dinner and Dance, four deserving young women were honoured with the Award of Merit for Outstanding Achievement. Displaying great character, volunteerism and academic achievement, the winners, who are all stutter—studying at the University of Manitoba are: Ms. Sheneik Wedderburn from Jamaica, majoring in clinical psychology; Ms. Dorismart Okeke from Nigeria, moni—majoring in social work; Ms. Idunnu Adejo from Nigeria, majoring in science with a focus on neurology; and Ms. Okeoghene Ojekudo from Nigeria, who is majoring in science with a focus on microbiology.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in acknowledging the great work of the Congress of Black Women of Manitoba and in congratulating this year's award recipients. As exceptional individuals and inspirational leaders of tomorrow, we wish you all the best in your future pursuits.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Winnipeg Sikaran Arnis Academy

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I rise today to recognize an exceptional institution in Burrows. The Winnipeg Sikaran Arnis Academy, a Filipino martial arts school, has become an important establishment in our community. Administrator and instructor Kelly Legaspi and chief instructor Redentor Igne led the group, which is comprised of 180 members, some as young as five years old.

Affiliated with Sikaran Arnis Canada, the academy focuses primarily on modern sikaran foot fighting, arnis stick fighting, Muay Thai grappling, and kickboxing. Students are taught not only self-defence, but are also shown how to lead healthy, active lifestyles. Whole families are included in special events, and some even train together.

I'm pleased to inform this House that Winnipeg Sikaran Arnis Academy has represented Canada at the Pan Am Games and at the World Karate Council's World Championship, and has won numerous awards at various competitions.

The academy takes every opportunity to perform at public events, such as Folklorama, CancerCare's Challenge for Life and street festivals. Performing for an audience helps students develop confidence and promote cultural understanding.

Notably, the academy hosted the first Canadian All Martial Arts Open at Maples Collegiate on November 24th, which I had the pleasure of attending. I'm proud to note that this competition brought participants to Winnipeg from Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario, making this an interprovincial event.

Over 120 fighters from 12 different martial arts schools competed and were accompanied by loved ones. I was glad to see the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief) there with us as well, as well as distinguished Filipino community leaders.

As for the member for Burrows, I am proud that the Winnipeg Sikaran Arnis Academy calls this constituency home. I extend an invitation to all members and Manitobans to discover this distinct art for their physical health and to recognize the positive contributions the academy has made to the greater community.

Thank you. And here they are.

Sheldon Kennedy

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, October 9th, Sheldon Kennedy was granted a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. In this presentation, Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged that it takes courage and conviction to perform tasks often considered to be thankless.

Because of this, I would like to both congratulate Mr. Kennedy on receiving his medal and in thanking him for his outspoken advocacy regarding the rights of sexual abuse victims.

Born in Brandon, Manitoba, and raised in Elkhorn, Sheldon Kennedy would go on to be—to a successful hockey career in both the Western Hockey League and the NHL, capturing a 1989 Memorial Cup and helping Canada win a gold medal at the 1988 World Junior tournament. Despite these accomplishments, however, Kennedy is best known for his advocacy regarding sexual abuse victims and his presentation—an inspiration to all in attendance on September 28th, 2012, at Virden Minor Hockey Sportsman's Dinner.

* (14:40)

In 1998, Kennedy rollerbladed across Canada to raise awareness for money—and money, pardon me, for sexual abuse victims. Since then, he has become a spokesperson with the Canadian Red Cross promoting programs against violence and abuse. More recently, he has co-founded an organization called Respect Group, which specializes in providing online information for the prevention of abuse and bullying.

Awarded an honorary degree from the University of the Fraser Valley and recognized with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, Sheldon Kennedy is the champion of the underdog and a steadfast supporter of children's rights. Given his bravery, compassion and dedication, Sheldon must be commended for starting the dialogue of the issue of sexual abuse in sports and for the great work he has continued to do since.

With this in mind, it is my honour to announce to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Sheldon was honoured at the 2012 Beyond Borders ECPAT Canada's Media Awards in Winnipeg with the inaugural Rosalind Prober Award for his inspirational fight against child sexual exploitation.

Keep up the good—the great work and, as a province, we cannot thank you enough.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Westwood Warriors Girls Volleyball Team

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of a group of talented, hard-working young women. The Westwood Warriors volleyball team has celebrated many achievements this season.

Every year the Winnipeg Sun publishes a coaches' poll of extraordinary young, male and female athletes in Manitoba schools. This year, Westwood Warriors' own Niki Majewski was one of

the top 10 female volleyball players in the poll. Nikki, named No. 6 on the list, swings smart and plays defence first, according to her coaches.

Nikki is not alone as an outstanding player, Mr. Speaker. She is one of several Westwood volleyball team members who have made it into the Sun's list over the years.

The Westwood Warriors are a perennial powerhouse in high school volleyball. They have captured the West Winnipeg Athletic Conference championship five times against teams from Fort Garry, Charleswood, Tuxedo, River Heights and St. James, as well as Stonewall and Portage.

The varsity girls team captured the championship again this November. Katie Hamm and Celina Dyck were named Winnipeg–West Winnipeg Athletic Conference Volleyball All Stars, and Nikki Majewski was chosen as most valuable player.

Their younger counterparts, the junior varsity team, are also a force to be reckoned with, winning the title last year. In fact, many Westwood volleyball players have gone on to play at the Canadian Interuniversity Sport or a National Collegiate Athletic Association level.

All of the outstanding players on the Westwood team have shown great dedication and teamwork this season, Mr. Speaker. Of course, high school sports are never possible without the many parents, teachers, administrators and fans who organize, manage, coach and support the team. These key team players are just as essential as the players who are giving their all on the court.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Westwood Warriors on a job well done this season and in thanking all of those who have been so crucial to their success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and go Warriors.

Jeffrey Cieszecki and Alexandra Nazarevich

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is blessed with some of the finest teachers in the country. This year, two amazing educators in the Rossmere constituency received national recognition for their dedication, inspiration and innovation in teaching.

Today I rise to congratulate Jeffrey Cieszecki, recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching

Excellence, and Alexandra Nazarevich, recipient of A Day Made Better Award. Both Jeffrey and Alexandra are incredible examples of what is achievable through education in this province.

Jeffrey Cieszecki teaches career exploration and space education for grade 7 to 12 students at Collège Garden City Collegiate. Through space and aerospace education he inspires students to develop their interest in science. Jeffrey's own passion and devotion to space education led to the establishment of the Space Exploration Academy, the Win-Cube Satellite Project and the Manitoba Space Adventure Camp. Each of these incredible projects has changed the lives of his students by engaging them in meaningful projects they can be proud of. This, in turn, fosters a love of academia and lifelong learning.

Alexandra Nazarevich is a classroom hero at Springfield Heights. She teaches grade 3 and 4 in the English-Ukrainian bilingual program. A pioneer of this international language program since 1979, Alexandra continues to inspire creativity and academic excellence while promoting multiculturalism by encouraging students to develop and take pride in their ethnic roots. Her students say that she is the best teacher ever, and that she makes learning easier when she explains it, and that as a teacher she makes me feel courageous in myself. To hear the admiration that her students have for her speaks volumes.

Mr. Speaker, today we are joined by Jeffrey Cieszecki and Alexandra Nazarevich, as well as their families, friends and colleagues. It is an honour to ask my fellow members to join me in congratulating Jeff and Alexandra for inspiring their communities, for promoting multiculturalism and scientific inquiry and for being champion teachers in our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

Seeing no grievances, I wish to draw the attention of the House—I neglected during the ministerial statements to ask leave for a moment of silence. So I'll try to remember that for the future. I just want to put that on the record.

And also, as the Assembly will be recessing today until the new year and particularly because we will have our Youth Parliament meeting here in the Chamber later this month, I am asking all members to empty the contents of their desk before leaving here today, and I encourage members to use the blue bins that are located inside the Chamber to recycle your various paper products, be it Hansard or bills,

et cetera. If you have any other material to recycle, it should be placed in the larger blue bins outside in the message rooms, and I thank all honourable members for their co-operation.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Could we proceed to third reading of Bill 3, please.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call, for concurrence—under concurrence and third readings, Bill 3, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child).

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 3—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 3, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés en cas de maladie grave, de décès ou de disparition d'enfants), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Very brief words today at third reading—I just want to note for the members of the House, the amendment in this bill was to make absolutely sure that if parents were charged with a crime that led to the disappearance or murder of their child that they wouldn't be eligible for the leave provisions in this bill. I know there was some question at committee about whether it should not be a conviction, but the reality is that a conviction could take so long as to not make the leave provisions relevant.

We had a very good committee meeting. I want to thank the people who came to present. We know that this bill won't deal with every hardship and every sadness faced by parents who find themselves in this kind of tragic situation. We know that there

was good advice provided to us and we will follow up on that advice with the federal government in terms of other supports that parents could use, and especially parents who have children who have committed suicide.

* (14:50)

I want to thank members of this House for their anticipated co-operation—so far, co-operation—on getting this bill through the House. It is a necessary thing because the leave provisions for some of these leaves will come into effect at the end of this year and we wanted to ensure that should parents be faced with this tragedy that they will be able to take a leave from their job without a fear of losing that job.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I'm pleased to put a few words on the record with regard to Bill 3, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child).

I would like to indicate that we are very supportive of this bill. It's keeping in line with the federal government's bill that they introduced in September, the Helping Families in Need Act, in the House of Commons.

And what this bill is doing is complementing or providing the safety net necessary for families to be able to take leave from their jobs and not have to worry about losing their jobs while they're away taking care of their children, or in the case of a loss of a—or disappearance or a murder of their child, they will also be able to return to their jobs in a period of time.

I want to indicate that, yes, we did have concerns with regard to the eligibility of individuals who may be applying for this benefit to—for leave—if they are charged with a crime. So I appreciate the amendment that was shared at committee the other day and definitely support the amendment that she had—that the minister had presented. And I am encouraged from her comments to know that she's going to be approaching the federal government to ensure that that also is something that they've considered in their legislation.

So, you know, I just want to say that I am—I believe that this is an important piece of legislation that is very important to Manitoba families and that it will provide the supports needed when families are in a crisis.

As a parent, I know that when my child is ill that what I want to do is be at home with them and ensure that they get better as quickly as possible. I can only imagine the horrible situation of having a child go missing or is murdered through a crime. That is just a non-believable horrible situation, and I believe what we're agreeing to today will provide some 'solance' for the family going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I join other members of this Legislature in expressing pleasure that this bill is passing third reading and will go into effect.

As a physician, I looked after many children with cancer and I know how badly and how important—how badly this bill is needed and how important it will be to families who have had a child who is very seriously ill or who dies. And I think it's taken quite a number of years to have this in place, but, I think, moving forward it is a welcome step and a very humane one.

As I mentioned at second reading, I think that when it's implemented it's very important to have the flexibility so that a person can take this leave on an intermittent basis instead of having to take it all at once. And I have discussed this with the minister at the time that I was getting briefed on the bill and I've been assured that that indeed is going to be the case. So I hope that that will be—that will happen.

I think it's important that we recognize, as well, not just a child who is sick from a disease, but a child who dies as a result of a crime, and this also is welcome.

And we had a relative of Heaven Traverse, who had died as a result of a crime and murder. And she talked about how important it was to recognize the parents and to make sure that we are, as this bill does, recognize that this should apply to biological parents as well as foster parents who are looking after a child in such a circumstance.

I think the message came through loud and clear at the committee meeting that it's important in the future to consider what other situations may arise. For example, if somebody has taken time off work to study and all of a sudden has this sort of a tragedy, will they have support through this program? Not at the present time, but perhaps it's—sometime in the future.

I think that the circumstance of an individual who is charged with a crime, that it's appropriate that such a not—an individual not be supported through this program. But I do think that it is important to add that there are circumstances where an individual may be charged and then found innocent, and it would be important, if it were possible at that point, to reverse that decision. But, certainly, I think the legislation, as it is now, with the amendment that was made, is an important and a significant step forward. And I am glad, and we're looking forward to seeing it implemented very quickly.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 3, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child), as amended.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Can we proceed to second readings, starting with Bill 2 and then going to Bill 15?

SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: So we'll now proceed with second readings, starting with Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel).

Bill 2—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité du personnel d'urgence et des agents d'exécution de la loi), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: I was very pleased a few days ago to join with my colleague, the Minister responsible for MPI, and my colleague, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), to announce that we'd be proceeding with Bill 2. I was also very pleased to be joined by police officers, representative of the chiefs of police,

firefighters and paramedics, because, Mr. Speaker, we're bringing this bill in because of the work they do.

Simply put, every day, 365 days a year, 24-7, our police officers, our firefighters, our paramedics, our other enforcement officers, our provider of emergency services, are in situations on our highways where they're making it safer for us as members of the public. What this bill does, very simply, is it makes it safer for them in their workplace. When I say their workplace, I would hope we're at the point in time in this province, Mr. Speaker, where we would all agree that workplace safety and health is an absolute fundamental priority for all of us.

What's different for emergency personnel in many cases their workplace is not in an office, it's not in a factory, but it's the side of a road. We've seen far too many cases throughout North America where emergency personnel have been killed. There were two just recently killed, Mr. Speaker. It's very simple: despite provisions in our legislation that we have currently, in this province we require people to slow down, not everybody does, and a lot of people don't slow down enough.

*(15:00)

So what we did, Mr. Speaker, we consulted. We talked to the chiefs of police, we talked to firefighters, paramedics. We talked to others—CAA—and we received a clear message: if you want to get people to slow down, the first thing you need are clearer parameters. So what this bill does is requires that where the speed limit is 80 kilometres an hour or greater, you have to slow down to 60. If it's less than that, you have to slow down to 40. And I could say it's an urban-rural difference, but there are some urban areas where you have the 80 or above situation, but it reflects that there is a difference scenario in each case.

What the bill also does is it follows the same principle that we follow for school buses: the requirement that people—in that case with a school bus—have to stop on either side of the highway. And in this case, we brought in a provision that will require people to slow down where you have a situation, Mr. Speaker, on a two-lane highway or in a road setting in an urban community, and the only differential with that is if there's a median, you only have to slow down on the one direction. But, again, that's another important aspect that this bill deals with.

What it also does is recognize what has to happen right now in many situations, and that is our firefighters are often early on the scene, perhaps first on the scene, and one of the key elements in dealing with emergency service situations, you have to be able to control the traffic. And this clearly establishes a legal ability for our firefighters to direct traffic, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I want to stress a couple of things here. This is not about penalizing motorists. I hope it won't even be about enforcement primarily. I think most Manitobans, given clear requirements in terms of The Highway Traffic Act, they'll follow that. But I do want to stress that we will be having a period of time where we'll have public education, but after that we will have enforcement, because we certainly recognize that there are some people that no matter what kind of common-sense laws and regulations we bring into place will continue to act in a situation that is unsafe.

And what I think is really important in this particular case is to really emphasize the fact that this happens on a daily basis. I know myself, Mr. Speaker, I had some experience with how important it is for people to slow down in those type of scenarios. I had a situation a number of years ago where I was driving home on Highway 6. It was rather icy conditions. There was a car in the ditch. There was an emergency vehicle providing assistance to that car. I actually slowed down. The person behind me didn't slow down and I ended up getting rear-ended. I actually still have some impacts from the whiplash from that, and if we'd had this kind of legislation in place and if that individual had perhaps followed it, it would have been a very different scenario. There would have been ability for that person to stop.

And I do want to stress, again, that this is not a theoretical bill. It's not about a, you know, punitive approach. Everybody I talked to at the news conference, it was reaffirmed again. People were talking about close calls even this past weekend with the very icy conditions. Even on Highway 1, where we had a number of collisions involving semis, we had passenger vehicles that were put at risk, and it came as a result of an emergency-service-providing vehicle with flashers, you know, flashing lights clearly identifying it as such—some people slowing down and others not slowing down.

The advantage of this bill is very clear and I want to stress it again: 80 or above, or under

80 kilometres, two separate requirements to slow down. And if you slow down there's no penalty whatsoever, but what it does, it provides a clearer approach.

So, to sum up, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put on the record, I think, our appreciation as Manitobans for the work that our emergency service providers provide, whether it's our police officers who are enforcing The Highway Traffic Act or, quite frankly, any of our laws, whether it's our firefighters who are attending to a fire or to an emergency situation, whether it's our paramedics are providing emergency roadside medical care, whether it's the CAA that's providing—as we saw across the province or other tow-truck providers providing emergency service provision, any vehicle. And we have many provincial vehicles that will be attached—that will be affected as well. There'll be the NROs or the enforcement that we have in place for our—through our various highway trucking regulations. The bottom line is their job, their No. 1 priority is to make things safer for us. What this bill does, it makes things safer for them in their workplace on the side of a highway, and I would urge all members of the House to support it.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the—I'm recognized.

Mr. Speaker: Do you wish to yield the floor to other members that may wish to debate the bill at this point, and then I'll recognize you after that if you wish?

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): It gives me great pleasure to stand here today to speak on Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, the respect for safety and emergency personnel. I was at the announcement the other day of the initiative with the Justice Minister and the Minister of MIT along with the firefighters, police and the paramedics. And an interesting fact I wanted to point out is that the head of the firefighters' union, Alex Forrest, was there standing with us, and he got to say a few words in the media. And he said that he's been all across Canada representing firefighters everywhere and he said that Manitoba is the best out of all of the provinces across Canada. Alex said that Manitoba has protections and recognitions for firefighters second to none. Mr. Speaker, this point needs to be repeated again for the opposition—that we're the best in the country second to none.

That's what our side of the House believes. That's what we do. We care about workers. We care about all workers. We want every worker to go home safely. We support our firefighters. We support our police. We support our paramedics.

On our side of the House, it's all about people, all about their lives, all about the lives of Manitobans, not just the bottom line, not just about facts and figures on a piece of paper. This is a strong contrast to what we hear across the way every day from the House in the—by the Conservatives. Cut, cut, cut. Money, money, money. Money cannot tuck your children in at night. If the members opposite would have their way, these deep cuts would have an impact on everyone, especially the front-line workers. We saw this not even two years ago when these members opposite voted for reckless cuts to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. These cuts would have put lives at risk, put Manitobans at risk and put first responders at risk. We stood up and we said no. We chose a different path. We stood up beside our firefighters, beside our police, beside our paramedics. These brave men and women that stand in harm's way, they run into dangerous situations when most of us are running away. We support them and at least everybody in this House can support them, Mr. Speaker.

Something we can all do to support them is to slow down when passing an emergency vehicle. Move over, change lanes, pull over to the right when an emergency vehicle is coming up behind you and stop. Any one of these easy steps only takes one or two minutes out of every day, but that could mean the difference between life or death of a patient or even a first responder. That is why we are putting Bill 2 forward, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, respect for the safety and emergency of enforcement personnel, because we respect first responders. Mr. Speaker, the reckless cuts the Conservatives would have made to some would have not—would have had some not go home to their children at night. All over what, a budget line, money, the idea that we need to balance in a book? Not under our balanced approach—no way. First responder is an inherently dangerous job, but we will do everything we can on this side of the House to make sure that we stand with them.

I look forward to every member of this House standing up and voting for Bill 2, under the highway traffic amendment act, respecting the emergency workers in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Taillieu: I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 15, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage Protection for Employees with Disabilities).

**Bill 15—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act (Minimum Wage Protection for
Employees with Disabilities)**

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 15, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage Protection for Employees with Disabilities); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (protection du salaire minimum pour les employés ayant des incapacités), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (15:10)

Ms. Howard: I spoke perhaps more than I should have at first reading on this bill, and—because we had people with us in the gallery who had lobbied for a long time to get the provision in the code that allows for people with disabilities to earn less than minimum wage out of the code. And, for those people, it's important. It's practically important, but I would argue that it's also very symbolically important.

And, when I've had discussions with people with disabilities about the part of the code that allows for this, what they are very concerned about is having anything that would suggest that, for no other reason than because one has a disability, one is somehow worth less than somebody else or valued less than somebody else.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, there are people who have benefited from this kind of relationship with employers or people who currently have this relationship. We've talked to those people and their families and their employers, and we know for many of them, they find the work rewarding and we wouldn't want to interrupt that, and so that's why we've provided for a grandfathering clause in the

legislation to allow for the certificates that have been issued to continue, but also to allow for the director of Employment Standards, should it become necessary, to change those certificates to ensure people are protected.

There are many organizations, of course, who engage in rehabilitation and training and other activities with people with disabilities that may involve some work placement or training opportunities with employers—those arrangements won't be affected by this bill. We do want to work with those organizations to make sure that everybody understands that the exemptions that rehabilitation programs operate under have to ensure that somebody isn't in a true employment relationship, that it is of therapeutic value and that there are other things that go on in those programs.

And so the Employment Standards part of my department is working with the Community Living part to make sure that organizations are aware of their obligations under those exemptions.

I want to thank the members of the disability community who have worked very hard to push this piece of legislation forward, particularly Dave Martin, who served in the role of executive director of the Disabilities Issues Office, who's worked with me as a special adviser and who has reminded me often of the need to move forward on this kind of legislation. He is someone who lives and—everyday as a person with a disability as an example to all of us not to place expect—unfair expectations on each other.

The other day when I spoke at the December 3rd gathering for the international day for people with disabilities, I talked about how, for me, one of the themes of doing disability rights work is the theme of defying expectations. For people with disabilities, from the time we are born or acquire a disability, people's expectations of us are less than they should be. And many people with disabilities have experienced being told that we would never work, that we would never live independently, that we would never have a family, and I know so many people that have defied every one of those expectations and continue to do that every day.

So I look forward to having more debate on this bill in the future. I look forward to the passage of this bill because I think it will send a very strong message from this Legislature that we value all people equally and that we value the work of people with disabilities. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I move, seconded by the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese), that we adjourn debate on Bill 15.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please call second reading on Bill 18, followed by Bill 17.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call for second reading, Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)

**Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Safe and Inclusive Schools)**

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (milieu scolaire favorisant la sécurité et l'inclusivité), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: We believe that every student in Manitoba deserves to feel safe and respected in school, on the bus, on the sports field and in the community. Manitoba has been at the forefront in Canada in taking action to prevent bullying and through our Safe Schools Charter has made it the duty of all school divisions to provide a safe and caring school environment.

Our reporting bullying legislation has set out clear expectations about reporting incidents of bullying to the principal and to parents, and legislative changes contained in this bill will help strengthen reporting on cyberbullying. We are the first Province in Canada to provide respect in schools training to all staff and volunteers in schools to help them understand and respond to the incidents of bullying, abuse, harassment and to neglect. The Respect in School training program was developed by Sheldon Kennedy, a good friend, a hockey player who was abused by his coach. His message was clear, don't be a bystander, speak up.

Mr. Speaker, students, educators, trustees, school staff and parents are working hard every day to ensure that our schools are safe and caring places. Bill 18 is about supporting their efforts to make our schools safe and inclusive learning environments. We are familiar with the tragic story of Amanda Todd. She was a young, bright, vibrant teenager who

was a victim of cyberbullying. Her tragic story shows that bullying not only happens in school, but in social media and on the Internet.

Bill 18 introduces new provisions to protect students against cyberbullying and ensure that our schools are safe, caring and accepting places where all students feel respected. The bill defines bullying and recognizes that bullying can take a variety of forms including cyberbullying. With this new legislation, a school employee or a person in charge of pupils during school-approved activities must make a report to the principal if they become aware that a pupil has engaged in or has been negatively affected by cyberbullying. School boards must also ensure that their policies about the appropriate use of the Internet include social media, text messaging and instant messaging.

When Bill 18 becomes law schools become more inclusive with new measures that require each school board to establish a respect for human diversity policy. The policy is to promote the acceptance and the respect of others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment. The policy must also accommodate students who want to lead activities that promote gender equity, anti-racism, understanding, respect for people with disabilities, and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities including student-led clubs or groups that use the name Gay-Straight Alliance. We know that right now in the province of Manitoba there are 31 Gay-Straight Alliance groups here in Manitoba high schools.

Bill 18 is a part of a safe and inclusive schools antibullying action plan which will provide new resources and supports for teachers, for parents and for students to help make our schools a safer place. We will make new resources available to teachers, parents and students so they can recognize and respond to bullying and those materials, Mr. Speaker, will be on our website and are on there right now. Through an online survey tool schools will be asking students about the kind of bullying and cyberbullying that occurs in their school. This will be a confidential survey where young people can tell us truthfully how they are feeling and we will be able to learn from that data that we will get and take action.

In the coming months I will continue the conversation with our education partners, with our community partners across this province how we can work together and we can continue to create safer environments for our students in school and out,

because we all know that this is what we need to do. We need to make sure that schools are in learning facilities that encourage them to reach their potential.

I'm sure all members of this House believe as I do in the need for schools to be safe. This legislation responds to the realities of social media use and human diversity in our schools. It provides direction in giving support and a voice to teachers, parents and students so we can all work together in making schools safe and building a better society.

Thank you.

* (15:20)

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to put a few words on record in support of Bill 18.

As someone who has spent many decades in the school system, I have experienced the transformation of our society through technology and the effects that spill over into our education system. Relationships and interactions between students, parents, teachers and the many individuals who are part of our schools have undergone changes with regularity as a result of technological innovation. When I think back to my short term as a curriculum consultant with the Department of Education, I was the first consultant to have the use of a computer, and that was less than two decades ago.

And today, who knows what generation of computer we are on, let alone cellphone, tablet or other communication devices, not to mention the Internet and access to any number of social media connections, all of which affects each of us, but especially the younger generation who embrace new technologies in a flash.

But, with every new innovation and the positive opportunities it brings, there's also a dark side, which we are seeing in the form of cyberbullying. Over the past decade our government has met the challenges of our changing society and the impact it has on our students and schools. Our students have the right to feel safe and respected not only within the four walls of the school, but in the greater school environment, which today extends beyond the building and school ground. That is why I am very pleased to be a part of a government that recognizes the importance of education and the role schools play and, to that end, shows leadership in the ongoing development of policies and programs that support safe and inclusive schools.

Bill 18 continues to build on a solid foundation we have put in place through the Safe Schools Charter and legislation which sets expectations for reporting serious incidents and the follow-up actions that are required in schools. With this legislation Manitoba continues to be in the forefront in taking action to prevent bullying.

Bill 18 also has the additional elements of respect for human diversity and support for student-led initiatives and clubs, but it will also include an antibullying action plan, which will provide the supports and training absolutely necessary for teachers with additional help for both students and parents.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is the reflection of our ongoing vigilance of the needs of our students, schools and communities.

Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I move, seconded by the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 17, The Consumer Protection Amendment and Business Practices Amendment Act (Motor Vehicle Advertising and Information Disclosure and Other Amendments).

Bill 17—The Consumer Protection Amendment and Business Practices Amendment Act (Motor Vehicle Advertising and Information Disclosure and Other Amendments)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby), that Bill 17, The Consumer Protection Amendment and Business Practices Amendment Act (Motor Vehicle Advertising and Information Disclosure and Other Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales (publicité et communication de renseignements visant les véhicules automobiles et autres modifications), now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: This bill amends The Consumer Protection Act and The Business Practices Act by adding a new part dealing with motor vehicle advertising information disclosure. This bill

continues the commitment the government has made in its five-year consumer protection plan, Let's Make a Better Deal, to address the issues Manitoba consumers are facing when buying a new or used vehicle.

Buying a vehicle is often one of the larger financial commitments that families make. Ensuring that consumers are provided with truthful, verifiable, clear information helps buy—the challenges of buying a car much easier. Several other provinces, like Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia have legislation that specifically addresses motor vehicle advertising. These laws have been working well and we have had the opportunity to identify provisions from these provinces that will address issues in our marketplace for the benefits of both consumers and businesses. Consultation with consumer groups, industry and major stakeholders around advertising information disclosure began in 2011 and has continued throughout the development of these amendments. Further consultation with all involved parties will be done to support the development of regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments to The Consumer Protection Act and business 'pract' act—Business Practices Act—will protect consumers by providing them with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions.

New protections are needed to address vehicle advertising practices that can mislead consumers. It's not uncommon for advertised practices not to reflect the actual cost associated with vehicles. We believe that the real price is the advertised price and it makes sense to be like that. Advertised prices often exclude fees such as: freight; documentation charges; or inspection fees; or the additional cost buried in fine print. As well as advertised prices are often subject to conditions such as minimum trade-in value; a requirement for—to use dealer financing; or a minimum down payment. These additional costs and charges can result in consumers paying much more than they really did expect from the advertisement.

Also, Mr. Speaker, such practice mislead consumers and create an unfair marketplace or a nonlevel playing field for businesses that fully disclose all pricing details upfront in the advertisement. We've heard that—from the industry—that many dealers would like to use all-in prices including all fees and charges. By introducing the requirements, we will 'leven' the playing field.

Mr. Speaker, with these amendments, the motor vehicle advertising must 'exclose' a total price of a vehicle including all taxes, charges, fees and levies except the PST and GST, as long the advertisement indicates PST and GST are not included.

Dealers are prohibited from false advertising. Advertisements featuring vehicles that are the current model year or previous model year will have to be identified if the vehicle is new or used. And if two or more motor vehicle dealers jointly placed an advertisement they're required to 'indentify' any differences in the charges included in the advertised price and inform buyers that they may be required to pay an amount of the difference. Other advertisement rate requirements will be set out in regulations.

It's—this bill also provides a dealer from engaging in false advertising or providing false information. These amendments apply to dealers. The application of legislation could be extended to others, such as manufacturers, by regulation. And, Mr. Speaker, when the main attributes of effective regulation is enforcement, under this bill, requirements for information disclosure on the sale or lease of a vehicle will be moved from The Business Practices Act to The Consumer Protection Act. This gives the Consumer Protection Office more tools, enforcement tools, and administrative penalties and compliance orders.

Along with better enforcement, these amendments will protect consumers by enabling Consumer Protection Office to notify the public vote of compliance order as soon as it's been issued, informing consumers and companies who are in violation of the consumer protection law to prevent ongoing marketplace abuses.

Mr. Speaker, the rates, benefits and protections of the act apply even if the consumer has signed an agreement to waive stating otherwise. Unfortunately, many consumers who sign these waivers may actually believe they no longer have rights. Accordingly, they do have rights and they have the rights under Consumer Protection Office. This bill includes amendments under The Business Practices Act, prohibiting people from requiring consumers to waive their light—rights.

Mr. Speaker, under this bill, the Consumer Protection Office will have the authority to alert the public about unfair business practices in the marketplace when it's in the public's interest to do so. Similar provisions were introduced in The Consumer

Protection Act last spring when we also expanded the legislation.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, these amendments protect consumers, level the playing field and make sure that there's a fair marketplace for all. This is a result of good consultation work on behalf of my department and I encourage all members to support it.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I move, seconded by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): We'll proceed to second reading of Bill 16.

Mr. Speaker: We will now proceed to call Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act.

* (15:30)

Bill 16—The Department of Justice Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard), that Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Justice, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, this bill responds to a need to ensure that there is a fair and equitable process to retain and compensate legal counsel when a court determines that a person is entitled by law to government-funded legal representation, or that a lawyer ought to be retained to assist the court.

I know we will have a chance to discuss the bill in detail. I will be briefing my critic and also we can discuss at the committee stage, but there are a couple of points I'd like to bring to the attention of honourable members.

Our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees all persons charged with a criminal offence the right to a fair trial. It also guarantees people fundamental justice in situations where life, liberty or security of the person is an issue. In order to fulfill these protections, the courts have the authority to direct the government to provide a lawyer to those who require legal assistance but are not financially able to retain a lawyer privately or are

not eligible for legal aid under a province's legal aid plan. This will usually occur in serious criminal matters or in child-welfare proceedings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has one of the best legal aid plans in Canada, this despite a lack of support by successive set-provincial-of rather, federal governments over the past many years. Where once the federal government paid 50 per cent of Provinces' and Territories' legal costs, the current federal government now pays only 16 per cent of those costs.

When a court makes such an order, the government does not become directly involved in the process for retaining and compensating the lawyer to avoid any potential conflict of interest. This bill, Mr. Speaker, will permit a process to be set up by regulation to retain and compensate the lawyer. It is anticipated the regulation will allow Legal Aid Manitoba to manage the matter and will ensure that the lawyers who are retained are compensated in the same manner as those who accept legal aid certificates.

The bill also addresses another situation where the courts appoint a lawyer. In some instances, a person may not have a lawyer by choice or they may not be able to find a lawyer willing to take on their case. In these circumstances, the court may direct that a lawyer assist the court by performing certain functions in the trial that will serve to protect the accused's constitutional rights or the rights of parents in child-welfare cases.

An example, Mr. Speaker, would be a domestic violence case where the court may choose to appoint a lawyer for an unrepresented accused for the purposes of questioning the victim. The purpose of that is to avoid an abuser from being able to, once again, abuse and harass the victim in court.

The rates to be paid to the lawyers who offer this service to the courts will be paid according to regulation at a rate equivalent to that paid by Legal Aid Manitoba.

Finally, the bill will permit lawyers employed by Legal Aid Manitoba to act in the two situations I've described above. Should this occur, the government will compensate Legal Aid Manitoba for the lawyer's services at the rates set out in the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we'll be able to discuss this bill in more detail in the future and certainly at the committee stage, so I will conclude my remarks at this point.

I look forward to having this bill passed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Could we resume second reading on Bill 5?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to second readings—resume second readings on Bill 5, The New Home Warranty Act.

Bill 5—The New Home Warranty Act

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'll finish up my quick comments on The New Home Warranty Act.

Provinces like Ontario, Québec and BC have extended new home warranty protection to people in those provinces. Part of this was happening because of the leaky condo crisis and some other issues. Manitoba will continue to move forward.

Other things, like com—discussions with stakeholders such as the builders, engineers and architects, et cetera, has been continued since—for many years. The outcome of these consultations suggest that although not every homebuyer experienced construction related defects, they do occur. And they occur after the person has taken possession of the house, and what happens is that these issues might be many hundreds of thousands of dollars. And most homeowners can't accommodate that after they move into a new home. So we need to take action.

The proposed legislation would be covered for single family homes, townhouses, condominiums. It will not apply to dormitories, care facilities, hotels and rental apartments. We will also continue to work with others, such as people who are building their own homes, to make sure that the regulations are fair and equitable. Warranties will be provided by third-party warranty providers, who must be registered within the Province to be registered. A warranty provider can either be an insurer or other businesses—that is fully backed by—insurer. In the latter situation, the insurer backed must agree to step into the shoes of the warranty provider and administrator to pay the

claims if the warranty provider is bankrupt or the business ceases to operate.

When issues arise, we expect consumers will go to their builder, try to get them resolved. But if this is—fails, then the consumer can go to a third party warranty provider and file a claim. The third party provider will assess the claim and move forward.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that all home builders are operating on a level playing field, home builders will be registered with the Province, and with this legislation, only registered builders are allowed to build homes for others for sale.

Homes built by registered builders must be covered by a home warranty. The minimum required warranty coverage is: 12 months for defects of materials and labour and design; 15 months for common areas of condominiums and common areas of other buildings with two or more dwelling units under one ownership; two years for violations to the building code that are likely to cause health or safety—material damage to the homes, defects that make the home unlivable; electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning systems; the building envelope, including water penetration; and defects to the exterior cladding, caulking, windows and doors that lead to 'distachment'; or—and also seven years for structural components.

Manitoba's coverage is roughly comparable to Ontario, our closest neighbour, with a mandatory home warranty legislation. Once we've gained some experience, if there's strong consumer demand or need to increase the level of coverage, we can look into that and look through the consultations and engage in consultations before any changes are considered.

The warranty will require homes and condominiums to be covered up to \$100,000. The common element— are covered up to the lesser of \$100,000, times the number of units, or a maximum of \$2.5 million for each building. This is separate and apart from the unit coverage.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes in some cases an owner may wish to build their own home. In those cases, the owner does not need to obtain a home warranty. However, if these owner-builders will be subjected to certain restrictions, an owner-builder must obtain authorization from the Province for—before building their own home and restrictions on an owner-built home about the warranty shall be placed in regulations.

One of the worst-case scenarios, Mr. Speaker, is for a home to be built without a warranty. To prevent that, the bill prohibits permit-issuing authorities from building-issuing a building permit unless the applicant provides proof of the warranty. A builder who fails to supply a home warranty provided by a warranty provider is deemed to have provided a warranty to the owner, and the builder's warranty provides the same coverage as the minimum required under the home warranty system.

Mr. Speaker, to assist consumers and others, to educate themselves about the builder-warranty provider-of home-they may consider purchasing a public registry, listing names of registered builders, warranty providers, owner-builders and prospective addresses of the new homes will be available. Consumers can verify the standing of a prospective builder or determine the amount of the warranty on the new home using this system. To ensure buildings-builders comply with the act, compliance officers will have broad powers to inspect records, obtain information. They will be authorized to issue compliance orders, requiring builders and others to become registered or take actions to come into compliance.

The issue of administrative penalties will also be permitted by regulations. A person subject to an offence under this legislation may be subject up to a fine of up to \$300,000, imprisonment of not more than three years or both. Mr. Speaker, these terms are consistent with other consumer protection legislation our government has passed. This legislation continues to move forward to our commitment to protect Manitoba consumers, ensure a level playing field of better business and make sure that people have faith in what they purchase. I encourage all members to support this legislation.

*(15:40)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a pleasure to rise and put a few words on the record regarding this bill. I've been looking forward to commenting on the legislation, Mr. Speaker, while we still have the opportunity here this afternoon, assuming that this might be our last opportunity until the House rises until sometime, I'm sure, early in the new year, in 2013, I'm sure. I might have had the opportunity—

An Honourable Member: Probably the middle of January.

Mr. Goertzen: —in January or February; we'll have to wait and see whether or not that's in fact the case.

I'm sure if the government feels so strongly about this legislation, they'll want to quickly recall the House so that it would be called to a vote.

Listening to the minister speak, I know he feels that there's hardly a way that Manitobans couldn't live without the legislation, so he'll want to quickly have the House called back to deal with the legislation in the spring. *[interjection]* Well, now I hear, you know, the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) wanting to rush through legislation without proper consultation with the public. You know, I'm distressed a little bit that the Government House Leader wouldn't want to have a full vetting of legislation and have people come to committee and hear about the legislation.

You know, when I heard the minister talk about protecting new homeowners, I wondered where he was when his government increased the land transfer tax, Mr. Speaker, to a significant rate in the province of Manitoba. I remember as a first-time homebuyer in 2003, when I bought a home in the lovely city of Steinbach, of course, to see this land transfer tax, and speaking with the lawyer who I was working with on the transaction, he indicated the government was increasing the fee and would probably continue to increase the fee. And I was under no hardship in terms of ability to pay, but I worried about other new homeowners who might have a difficult time paying that land transfer tax and wondered how it is that they could make ends meet.

And I was concerned at that time, and I know that the rate has gone up now, and we've heard from the Real Estate Association. They've started a bit of a lobby effort, Mr. Speaker, going on now for a few years, and I want to commend them. They've done a good job, I think, of ensuring that the information has been brought to Manitobans about the hardship that the radical increases to the land transfer taxes had on people who are first-time homebuyers, and I didn't hear the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) speak to that, speak to why he wasn't concerned about those additional fees being put on those new homeowners. And I thought this would've been a great opportunity for him, on the one hand, when he stands up and says they're doing this for those who are new to buy a home, that he would've said, in addition to that, we want to make it easier, more affordable for those who are buying a home in Manitoba.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, he didn't take that opportunity, and I was somewhat surprised. But I'm

sure this House, being in the gregarious mood that it is, so close to the end of session, would give him leave if he wanted to—*[interjection]* Well, I'm in a better mood than I was in question period. But if he—if the House wanted to give the minister leave to speak about how they've increased the land transfer tax, I'm sure the members on our House—or our side of the House would give him that opportunity, and we'd be happy to hear about how his government might look to reduce or perhaps even eliminate the land transfer tax for first-time homebuyers.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And, I know that's something that the Real Estate Association has been talking about the need for elimination on land transfer tax for first-time homebuyers. That's an interesting debate, and I think it's a debate we could have here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here on the floor of the Legislature, even at this late date in this short session. We could at least have the discussion if the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) would be so inclined.

And, you know, I have the opportunity, as a lot of members do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you as well, I'm sure, to speak to a lot of new Canadians who move here to Manitoba. I want to, of course, commend the federal government for the work that they've done in—

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Goertzen: The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) is very appreciative of the federal government and supportive of Prime Minister Harper generally.

But, most specifically, he's certainly supportive of the federal government's position on increasing immigration making sure that the system is fair and the system is well regulated and that there aren't individuals who are coming to Canada with the wrong intentions. But certainly the federal government has been working to increase, and I think—*[interjection]*. You know, I could be corrected, the member for St. Paul might know, I think that this federal government has brought in and allowed more new Canadians to come to our country than any federal government in the prior—in the history of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly send out our thanks to Prime Minister Harper for helping to offset some of the negative effect that this government has done in the province of Manitoba by allowing more new Canadians to come in.

And, specifically related to this bill then, of course, those new Canadians who come here are, in fact, looking for housing. They need to buy houses. They don't always, when they come to the country, have the opportunity to buy a home right away, often they have to work. I mean certainly the new Canadian, the immigrant's story is often one where people come in to the province and have to work a couple of jobs or work long hours, save up some money to put a deposit on to a house, Mr. Speaker. That's a story I think that all of us as MLAs have heard from our own constituents who are new to Canada, and we applaud those individuals, you know, they come here to make a better life for themselves. They make a better life for their family, for their children. Often they are supporting others who are still in the country that they've immigrated from and ensuring that they get resources, but they want to build a life for themselves, and included in that story is the ability to buy a house, and, you know, when you look at what this government has done in terms of increasing the land transfer tax for all buyers, and I think it hits everybody who purchases a home but it particularly hurts those who are first-time homebuyers and perhaps new Canadians who are looking for that dream, that Canadian dream.

We often hear the expression about the American dream, but there is a Canadian dream I think is very unique to this country, and part of it is the ability to build a home to ensure that we have—and I've heard the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) quote Martin Luther King in this House and we all have great respect for Dr. King, of course, but part of that dream whether it was the dream that Dr. King—that Martin Luther King spoke about or whether it's the—*[interjection]*—you know, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has a dream so we're all dreamers here, Mr. Speaker. We're all big dreamers. But I think that those new Canadians would want the opportunity to be able to purchase a house a little sooner. So insurance is one sort of discussion point around that, but the ability to be able to get into a home more quickly if one can afford it, if one's wherewithal—their means make that possible that's something this government has ignored. They've decided to increase that land transfer tax and postpone the dream, to make that dream less attainable, to make that dream further away, to make that dream something that isn't as easy for those great new Canadians who came here to build a life to start off in.

So I would hope that the member—the minister who introduced this bill would reflect on that when he talks about home ownership and a home insurance, to broaden his thoughts a little bit. To realize that the increase of land transfer tax has done nothing to help those new Canadians and all first-time homeowners and other owners, Mr. Speaker, to attain that dream that they so much want to attain.

You know, I look at—you know, related to the flood, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Clerk's office and the table officers will be wondering, well, what's the relationship to this bill and the flood, and I'll draw the connection. When you talk about home ownership and the ability to be in one's home, when the government lectures and stands here and lectures individuals about home ownership, this is the government who promised those who would be flooded out in the 2001 flood that they would receive fair and fast compensation and full compensation; in fact, I think is what they said for their homes. And yet we know that there are many, many individuals who are victims of the 2011 flood that struck the province who aren't in their homes, who aren't able to access the homes they had before, and yet this is a government who made that promise.

Now, I recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they made that promise before the election before it was called, and so some might think that it was somewhat politically motivated, that—*[interjection]* In fact, the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), of course, recognizes that it may have been politically motivated or he was still clapping for Prime Minister Harper, I'm not sure which it was, but they know that before the election there was all sorts of promises to members who—or individuals who are affected by the flood and these individuals wanted to be back in their homes. They wanted to see their homes restored to the pre-flood conditions, and they were promised — they were promised by this government prior to the election, in fact, that they would ensure that they would be back in their homes.

* (15:50)

And so we hear lectures about home ownership and we hear lectures about trying to protect people around their homes, and yet I ask this government why it is that they're not living by their own words when they speak to this bill about the importance of home ownership, about the importance of ensuring that individuals are able to be in their homes. I wonder why it is that they haven't met as a caucus and discussed those poor individuals in the flood

who aren't able to go back into their homes, who relied on the word of this government, Mr. Speaker, who relied on the assurance that at some point individuals would be able to go back into their homes.

So this is another opportunity, I suppose, for the members opposite, for the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) to come and to say that, in fact, he will ensure that those who want to be back in their homes and who should be back in their homes and who should be compensated for the damage to the extent that this government promised that they would, will have that.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now I know, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have indicated that they are relying on the federal government to provide assistance, and I want to assure this House that the federal government, of course, through transfer payments and through equalization payments which come from other provinces have been more than generous with this government. I don't think there's ever been a federal government in the history of Canada who's ever been more generous to the province of Manitoba in terms of transfer payments and in terms of equalization. When I talk to my federal colleagues in Ottawa, they're shocked. They're shocked that this government could possibly continue to plead poverty and to ask for more when they see how much they have given to this government, and I'm sure that they have some concerns about how it is that they spend their money, and how it is they spend those resources.

And, of course, that relates to the flood and the home ownership and to what the minister was saying because, in fact, the minister has been talking about how much he values the ability for people to be in homes that are safe and to be in homes that are secure. And yet, when his own government has the opportunity and makes a promise, a pledge, a solemn pledge, a solemn promise, to Manitobans to ensure that they would get full and fair compensation for their homes and for their dwellings as a relation to the 2011 flood, they reneged on that promise. They haven't come through. They said one thing before the election, and something completely different has happened.

I think about my own home community, the city of Steinbach, and how difficult, and I appreciate the—*[interjection]* Well, and you know I know the member for—minister of highways who, I think,

actually took credit for some development in Steinbach a while ago. I understand that Walmart's actually paying for that. They were quite concerned about the minister standing in this House and taking credit for intersection redevelopment that's being paid for by Walmart. *[interjection]* Well, he can certainly stand up—oh, I'm sorry. He said he never said that publicly, I guess. You know, there's one thing he says on the record; then there's one thing he says off the record. I—you know, if he's running two sets of Hansard underneath his desk, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be interference. Now, I might not be relevant, so I'll bring it back to the topic at hand.

In my own community, Mr. Speaker, there is a significant development that is happening, and, well, I'm—I—in my own community of Steinbach there is a good deal of development going on, thanks to the good work of the federal government, the federal government who is ensuring that there are a great number of new Canadians coming to Manitoba, ensuring that there's a great number of new people coming into our province. And I don't know, did I thank Prime Minister Harper before for his good work on immigration? I didn't. I wanted to thank Prime Minister Harper, and the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) also commends Prime Minister Harper for ensuring that there is record immigration. And, in fact, that record immigration has resulted in record development in the community of Steinbach and a number of new homes being developed and being built in the city of Steinbach.

Now, for a long time, Mr. Speaker, there was—there was a long time prior to this that we were not able to have a good development in the city of Steinbach because we lacked a development officer, a position that went unfilled for quite some time, and there was great concern among the individuals who are dealing with residential development in the city and in the region, that a position had remained empty for so long, a position that, in fact, had not been filled for a great long time. And, as a result, it was difficult to get development done in the city of Steinbach because that development officer was missing, a position that left—was left unfilled for a very, very long time.

So there were individuals who came around and who pleaded with this government to get that position filled to ensure that housing developments would continue to go up. There was certainly some in the real estate industry who came and asked the government to fill that position to ensure that, Mr.

Speaker, that position would be filled, and it was difficult to get the government to respond.

So, on the one hand, we have the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), the minister, talk about the need for housing in the province of Manitoba and who wanted to ensure that there was, in fact, a good ability for people to purchase houses and to have protection through insurance. But, on the other hand, this is also a government that wasn't filling that position, that wasn't filling the development slot, Mr. Speaker, and for the officer in the Steinbach region, so it was difficult for development to happen. So, again, we have this situation where the government, on the one hand, they say one thing, but, on the other hand, they do something completely different.

And you know, while we're on the topic of home ownership and the cost of home ownership, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to sit down without mentioning the fact that the government extended the retail sales tax to insurance on new homes, or on all homes, not just on new homes. That was an increased cost of 7 per cent, and I know every Manitoban who got their insurance bill in the last number of months to insure their home would have seen that their bill went up, that their bill went up about 7 per cent in most cases, and it's no coincidence that that's the same amount that the government put on for PST on those insurance products.

And so, on the one hand, the government talks about how important it is, Mr. Speaker, that we have home ownership and that that home ownership is secure and has insurance, and that debate will proceed, I'm sure, into the new session in the summer. But, on the other hand, they put on a 7 per cent charge on everybody who owns a home, increases the cost of home ownership, makes it more difficult for those new Canadians, those new Manitobans, those first-time homebuyers to actually be able to afford the cost.

Now I've heard from members opposite across the way who say, well, it's not really that big of a deal. *[interjection]* Well, you know, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants me to mention Stephen Harper, and I can understand why he sensed that we're all proud, of course, of the work that his daughter does, I'm sure, in Parliament, and we wish his daughter a long stay in opposition in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, on the opposition benches, as an opposition member.

But I digress. Back to the retail sales tax on homes, Mr. Speaker, which was my point before the member for Thompson threw me off track and got me talking about the great work that Stephen Harper's doing in Ottawa. The high cost of home ownership for many individuals is made higher, of course, because of the retail sales tax that's put on insurance. And so, just to refresh the memory now, when we look at the land transfer tax, which has gone up substantially under this government, and the increase, and the addition, of the PST, the retail sales tax to the insurance products for all homeowners, in many ways, they're making home ownership unaffordable for many people.

So I'm disappointed at the minister of—from Assiniboia, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) comes in and talks about the importance of home ownership and how dedicated he is to home ownership, but, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't mention that his government is making it harder and harder for individuals to have those first-time homes or to buy new homes because of the increase of the land transfer tax, because of the fact that they don't support development and have the resources in place to ensure that development happens, because of the retail sales tax that's been placed on insurance, and they don't value home ownership and those who own homes through their own actions, by not ensuring that those who were affected by the flood of 2011 find a full and fair compensation, as this government promised before the election.

* (16:00)

So, you know, there will be a number of months, I suspect, I hope not, but I suspect because I'm a little suspicious, Mr. Speaker, that there'll be some time between now and the next time this House sits—there will be some time for the government to reflect. And they'll want to, I think, reflect on how difficult it is for many new Manitobans and others to find their way into their dream home.

And I'd like to say that, when we talk about a dream home, for many Manitobans that's any new home, that's any home that they get into, their first home is their dream home, because they dream about having a place to call their own, a place to be able to raise their family, to be able to come home to, and know that it is their home, that it is their sanctuary. And that is something I think that all of us as legislators would like to ensure that that ability is there for all people to have.

So, when we see a bill like this come forward from the government, it might be with the best intentions. It's something we'll have, of course, longer debates about in the future, Mr. Speaker. But we'd want the government, over the next days, weeks or months or however long it is until this House is recalled, to be able to reflect upon that.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention in the brief time that I have left about the fact that this is a government that raised taxes to the highest level in 25 years in their last budget.

So, on the one hand, they're talking about how it's important to have home ownership and have security in that home ownership, but, on the other hand, we have a Premier who, first of all, made a solemn promise to the people of Manitoba in the last election that he wasn't going to increase taxes. He went door to door. He campaigned. He went on the radio. He went to, I'm sure, people's homes and made announcements in their backyards and promised them that he wouldn't raise taxes, Mr. Speaker. And then, shortly after the election, he turned around and he increased taxes by the highest level they've been increased in the last quarter century.

So it's a little bit rich, Mr. Speaker, when the government talks about affordability and wanting to ensure that people can have their dreams and have them secured through home ownership. That certainly isn't the sort of actions that are backed up when you go and you raise taxes by that level, when you raise taxes by such an incredible amount in a short period of time among the people. *[interjection]*

You know, and I was about to conclude my comments, but then the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) reminded me, Mr. Speaker, that this government has broken its promise to reduce taxes to seniors on their property. And I wouldn't want to let this festive season go without reminding seniors who might be listening to the debate this afternoon that, in fact, that's a promise this government made to them and haven't fulfilled. And so, when you talk about the affordability of home ownership, that certainly isn't something that makes it more affordable when you break your promise to these hard-working seniors, many of whom now are on a fixed income.

They've worked hard their whole life, but now they're on a fixed income. It's difficult for them to make ends meet, and a lot of them would have been relying on the promise of the Premier (Mr. Selinger). A lot of them would have looked at the Premier during the campaign and said, we're going to rely on

the word of the member for St. Boniface, and then we heard something completely different, of course. In fact, it didn't happen.

And I want to ensure that all members know that the promise by the Premier will not be forgotten. It won't be forgotten by us as legislators. It won't be forgotten by the people of Manitoba, by those seniors who that solemn promise was made to. We will ensure that they are reminded about the promise that this government made to them. We will ensure that the members opposite are reminded about the promise that they made, because we believe that a promise made should be a promise kept.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health Living, the member, the Minister of Consumer Affairs who brought forward this bill, to take some time over the Christmas holidays, to take some time over the short break, I'm sure, that we'll have until this House is resumed. I know all of us look forward to a speedy recall of the Legislature, but to take whatever time is afforded to him to reconsider some of the positions that this government has had in terms of housing, to reconsider continuing increasing the land transfer tax on those individuals who are purchasing a new home or purchasing an existing home and selling the home that they have; to reconsider the fact they're not doing much to support development for housing; to reconsider the fact that there are many flood victims who still, so long after the flood, are waiting for that fair and full compensation that the members opposite promised them; to reconsider the fact that they've broken a promise to seniors to reduce the burden that they have on their home ownership; to reconsider all of those facts. And so, when this House reconvenes in the days and the weeks ahead, that we can add that to the discussion, that we can add that to the discussion that we have here in the Chamber about home ownership and the value of home ownership.

I would hate to have to stand up and repeat all these points on third reading, Mr. Speaker. When that comes, I know Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has promised me she'll review the Hansard and consider it over the holidays—[interjection]—and I appreciate the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants to hear more from me, and we'll see what happens.

But I know, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Health will—I'll take her at her word. She'll review the Hansard that will be provided in the days ahead and review the comments closely and will probably

go to her colleagues in their next meeting and say, well, the member for Steinbach brought this forward from his heart and with all the right intentions, and we should discuss this within our caucus and Cabinet. And she'll go to the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau)—[interjection]—they may have a special meeting just to discuss this, and I wouldn't want to clog up anybody's holidays. But, whatever the situation is, in terms of their views, I would hope that they would reconsider the things that they've done to make home ownership harder in the province of Manitoba by increasing taxes, by putting on additional taxes, by making it difficult for development officers in the various communities to have the developments approved. And, on those poor seniors, Mr. Speaker.

I can't believe how fast time has flid, Mr. Speaker. You know, it feels like just minutes ago. It was my intention just to say a few words, but I'm passionate about home ownership. I'm passionate about the ability for people to afford housing, so, with those few comments, thank you for the House for indulging me, and I look forward to [inaudible]

Mr. Speaker: I'm advised that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is about to arrive to grant royal assent—oh, yes. Yes.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Now, I'm advised that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is about to arrive to grant royal assent to Bill 3. I am therefore interrupting the proceedings of the House for the royal assent.

* (16:10)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour Philip S. Lee, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Mr. Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting, the Legislative Assembly has passed a bill that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):

Bill 3—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés en cas de maladie grave, de décès ou de disparition d'enfants).

In Her Majesty's name, His Honour assents to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House business, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of our caucus to wish all the staff of the Assembly, our table officers, the pages, all members of the Assembly, a merry Christmas, malagayang Pasko, happy Hanukkah, happy holidays, and I wish you all the best in your time with your family during this wonderful season.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business, on behalf of our caucus and everybody, I want to wish everybody in the House the best of the season and to our table officers and pages and yourself, who served us so well over the last few weeks and continue to serve us well. I hope my friend, the Opposition House Leader, can rest his voice over the holidays, so he comes back in fine form to continue his debates when we come back in this House.

Thank you very much.

And I guess you could ask us if we'll call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a will to call it 5 o'clock. *[Agreed]*

Before I call it 5 o'clock, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy new year to you and your families, and I hope you'll come back safe to us in the new year.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until the call of the Speaker.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 6, 2012

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>